

Parks & Recreation Council

LOCATION:
Deerfield Gulf Club
507 Thompson Station Road
Newark, DE 19711

Thursday, May 4, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Council Members

Ron Mears, Chairperson
Clyde Shipman
Jim White

Ron Breeding, Vice Chairperson
Edith Mahoney
Greg Johnson

Joe Smack
Isaac Daniels

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director
Greg Abbott

Lea Dulin
Jamie Wagner

Matt Ritter
Vinny Porcellini

Matt Chesser

I. Introductions/Announcements

- A. Chairman Ron Mears called the Council meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.
- B. Recognition of Esther Knotts as “Employee of the Year”, Council wished Esther congratulations on a job well done and recognition that is deserved.
- C. Mentioned hearing Jim White on the WDEL radio.

II. Official Business/Council Activities

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the February 2nd meeting minutes. Ron Breeding made a motion to approve the minutes. Clyde Shipman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Council Member Reports:

1. Fort Delaware Society – *Edith Mahoney reported.*

Kids Fest is June 10th. The Society is working with the Division to provide activities and games. All activities are free but the Society will be selling water and pretzels.

Beginning Memorial Day they begin their Outreach program with Mount Salem Church and Cemetery.

The Society needs to begin fundraising. Edith asked if there is any staff that work in the Division who could provide “pointers” on fundraising. Dogus prints they would like to save, need cameras in the library and AV room, and need to replace carriage wheels on the island. They would like to get a grant to help cover the costs.

The first membership meeting is June 4th. Chris Ward will be speaking at the meeting.

The gentleman from the Fort DuPont Redevelopment Committee spoke at their last meeting and provided diagrams and drawings and information about what will be taking place on the property. Anyone interested in buying property there, will need to adhere to a deed restriction and keep their stuff period correct. They have begun working on established houses in the area and they are “bringing them up to code and they are period correct.” The Society had been concerned about their curatorship but it seems like they are safe. The gentleman thinks that things will be happening in the next two years. A sign about Fort DuPont has been erected.

Ron asked if Delaware City had just completed a bridge project. Edith said the bridge is finally open. That should help with tourism in the area.

2. Natural Areas Advisory Council – *Jim White reported.*

Members of the Council met with Park Superintendent Mike Moyer at Lums Pond to discuss opportunities to create natural areas at Lums Pond. Currently, Lums Pond has a very nice natural area behind the ball field and the cricket field. There was a proposal to create another natural area in the wetlands near the entrance of the park. At the moment, Mike is not interested in putting any more land into natural areas. The goal of the meeting was to reset the relationship between the Advisory Council and Park staff. They had a very good conversation and the Council wants to help Park staff to utilize the natural area in advertising and programming so that it is an asset to the park. The Council has a little different attitude about natural areas. The Council would like to allow to have more input in the decisions on how the land is going to be used. The Council hopes to meet with Superintendents at other parks. One concern of designating land as a nature preserve is that it limits future use of the land.

There was also discussion regarding the appointment of Ed Lewandowski as the representative from the Natural Areas Advisory Council to the Parks Council.

3. Wildlife Management Committee – *Clyde Shipman reported.*

In January the Division installed 21 temporary stands at White Clay Creek and 6 deer were taken. These numbers are much lower than last year. Matt Ritter explained that in years passed the Division was able to “push” deer from an adjacent property but that is no longer an option as it is now being hunted. The Division has no way of knowing how many deer were taken off the adjacent property this year. The Division is re-evaluating that hunt. There were questions about whether the numbers of deer taken on the adjacent property were reported to Fish and Wildlife. Ron Mears commented that not knowing the number of deer that are taken makes it difficult to manage the deer population. Ray stated that when the public report a kill to Fish and Wildlife, they are always specific about the specific location of the kill. Clyde stated the only time the Division gets specific numbers on the number of deer taken on our park is when we sponsor a special hunt. Matt Ritter said that at White Clay Creek the Division has a pretty good idea of the total number of deer taken.

Clyde asked if the Thompson Island archery hunt is new. Matt Ritter stated that we have hunted the island before but it is a challenge because the weather doesn’t cooperate. At White Clay, numerous hunters show up and sign in, then names are drawn to determine who has an opportunity to hunt and if someone declines, there is someone waiting to take their place. With the new strategy, hunters are selected prior to the day of the hunt and if they don’t show up, there is no one to take their place.

The Division is trying to establish a hunting lease at the Godwin Tract.

The Division is conducting evening heronry surveys at Delaware City and staff is also adding eggs in an attempt to lessen the number of Canada Geese in parks. Council commented that we hadn't discussed egg adding in a while. Matt Ritter shared that every year staff adds eggs and that in some areas (such as Wilmington State Parks) the Division hires people to come in and remove resident geese. The Division obtains federal permits that allow us to do this. The Division submits a report on the number of eggs added and geese removed. Clyde stated that 256 eggs were added. Ray stated that there is not much opportunity to goose hunt so adding is a best practice.

4. Resident Curatorship – *Joe Smack reported.*

Cultural Resources staff is awaiting a legal request review by the Department of Justice on the resident curatorship program. They are looking at the contract agreement and other areas of the program because they have never been formally vetted. The Division expects to have a DOJ decision by mid-May. That has put the curatorship at the Warrington House at Trap Pond on hold.

Someone is interested in a curatorship at the Sarah Brooks House, the 18th century log cabin located at Bellevue State Park. The interested party is a retiree from DuPont who has flipped 30 houses, built a home from scratch, and has experience and knowledge. He is a divorcee whose children are grown so he has the resources and time to devote to this project. Things look promising but there is an issue; Delaware Greenways goes through part of the property so we are trying to determine how to configure a driveway so that it doesn't go into the Greenways property. This property and the adjoining State Park property use cesspools. There is discussion about tying into the City of Wilmington sewer system and sharing the connection costs.

Ray stated that two weeks ago a local brewery approached the Division with a proposal to turn the Sarah Brooks House into a tap house, offices, and other services. The Division hasn't reviewed the proposal yet. The Division met with the owners of the brewery before and they definitely want to be in that area. This would be a departure from our traditional curatorship; we have never had a private business partner enter into a curatorship with the Division. The Division has been searching for a curator for this property for 10 years.

Joe Smack ran into Mark Chura while on vacation in March. Mark assured Joe that they (the Sussex County Land Trust) are working on getting the certificate of occupancy for the Wolfe House and that they should have it very shortly. They have some plumbing issues that have just been "cinched up" and Jim Hall, curatorship program manager hopes to do a walk-thru very shortly to ensure they are in compliance with the requirements of the curatorship program. They are also tying into the County sewer system which will allow the Division to tie in as well for the parking area.

5. Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds – *Greg Abbott reported.*

The 2017 grant cycle launch and the Division has \$876,000 available for local projects. With the "refund" of the Wilmington project that was not completed, funds available are

over \$1M. Invite letters were sent to all eligible agencies which includes 57 municipalities and three counties. Applications are due back by May 26, 2017. Both the Parks Council and the Greenways and Trails Council have been providing recommendations on the projects. Members of each Council will come together to review the applications to determine which projects will receive funding. The funds will be split evenly between trails and park projects.

Currently, all previously approved projects have been completed.

The Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund had grown from \$50M to almost \$53M just prior to the distribution of the \$876,000 for projects.

Greg shared a graph showing the performance of the three investment firms who are handling the funds. SCI is the new investment firm for the Delaware Community Foundation.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Staff Reports

1. Policy/Legislation – Ray Bivens reported.

The Bill for the boundary line adjustment at Bancroft Mills/Alapocas Bridge has passed both houses and was signed by the Governor. The Division is moving forward with the process there. Currently there is an easement through the Horty property to access the area. With the boundary line change, visitors will no longer enter the park through the Horty property. There are rumors circulating in the community that a fence will be put up which will prevent access to the park from that side of the property; those rumors are untrue. We are partnering with a company that will be making \$500K - \$600K in improvements in Alapocas Run State Park including building restroom facilities, installing a new entry, building a 25 car parking lot, and renovating an existing structure to provide a pavilion. The newspaper stated that this was a “land swap” but it is actually just an adjustment to the property line. The Open Space Council fully supported this agreement. The property was originally purchased with open space funds.

The second legislation that will impact State Parks is accommodations tax proposal. In the past, accommodations taxes only applied to hotels and not to State Parks or condominium or house rentals. The new law will apply to private rentals and all overnight State Parks facilities including cabins and campsites. Money collected is split among each county for tourism, a portion goes to beach replenishment, and a portion goes to the General Fund. The Division is concerned that applying the 8% tax to our fees will restrict our ability to raise fees in the future. The Division does not anticipate receiving any of the money generated by this tax. Greg Johnson commented that 8% is “not light”. He felt if the Division is “passing it along” the Division should be receiving a portion of the money that we are charging our customers. Clyde Shipman stated that someone made the comment to him that “State Parks is raising their camping fees.” The gentleman was complaining because, as a senior citizen, he felt, “the State was really whacking senior citizens”. Joe Smack asked if the 8% is the normal hospitality tax for hotel stays. Ray stated yes, that the proposed legislation is expanding to include campgrounds including privately owned campgrounds. The Division “ran the

numbers” and based on past numbers, increased taxes at State Park facilities will generate \$320K. Representative Hudson is sponsoring the bill but it has support from both sides. Greg Johnson stated that it would be nice if some portion of the funds generated was returned to Parks because this is a direct expense for Parks. Ron Breeding suggested the Council write a letter to the sponsors. Clyde stated that we don’t want this to limit our ability to change our rates in the future and said that he doesn’t think that the Legislators would be willing to exempt State facilities when the private sector is being taxed. Matt Chesser stated there is a precedent for the State not to tax itself; he provided examples such as gross receipts and reality transfer taxes. Isaac Daniels asked Ray if he sees this affecting tourism. Ray said he does see it affecting Parks especially in Sussex County where most rental properties are located. Delaware State Parks in Sussex County currently have the biggest capital needs too. Matt Ritter stated that if a portion of the hospitality tax was earmarked for capital projects it would help with backlog. Legislators may think that DEDO is providing funding to state parks but that is not true. Ray stated that while we are working more cooperatively with DEDO (Delaware Economic Development Office) than we have in the past, there is no funding source from DEDO to our parks. Isaac Daniels asked if this tax is targeting folks that market their homes on Air B&B. Ray said yes and he thought that Air B&B publicly supported this proposal. Clyde remembers this issue coming up when State Parks first got into cabin rentals. He wondered if other nearby states are charging a fee to campers. Ray stated that when the \$4.00 transaction fee was added to the price of overnight stays, there were no complaints. The transaction fee generates \$80-90K per year. Ray is concerned that folks that originally planned to stay a week with us, may shorten their stays when they see the additional fees and taxes. Joe Smack stated that 8% is noticeable. Greg Johnson reiterated that if we can’t stop the tax, the Division should try to get some of it. A letter will be drafted from the Council requesting the Parks portion of the taxes stay in State Parks. Ray stated that DNREC does receive money for beach replenishment from the taxes collected but Parks does not. Clyde made a motion that a letter be prepared and sent to sponsors proposing that the funds generated by the accommodations tax on Park facilities be returned back to Parks for capital improvements in State Parks. Joe Smack seconded the motion. The chairman called for a vote and the motion carried.

Ray gave Greg Abbott and his staff kudos for completing the Division’s Annual Report. It is only the second time in Park history that an annual report has been completed.

Ron Mears asked about the proposed legislation for Parks patrol. Ray said there is no proposal but there have been discussions about expanding the powers of seasonal patrol staff to allow them to write tickets but there has been no bill written. Ray stated there is a bill that would create a 20 year retirement for all enforcement including Park Enforcement Officers. Ron asked if we should move to get legislation proposed to expand the duties of the Park Patrol Officers. Ray stated that it is a contentious issue and that it does not have legislative support.

Delaware State Parks has 21 full-time Park Enforcement Officers including the Chief. In addition, a background investigation is being conducted on a potential hire. If that individual is hired, all merit enforcement positions assigned to the Division will be filled. The State is in a hiring freeze but the Division received an exception to hire law enforcement positions. The Division also received permission to hire an Assistant Superintendent at Lums Pond and the Superintendent at Fort Delaware. Matt stated that two new enforcement staff will be entering the academy in August. The Division will ask for additional exemptions from the hiring

freeze including the Planner IV position. The Greenways and Trails Council sent a supporting this hire. The Division will have seasonal staff, interns, a Veteran's Corps and a Youth Conservation Corps working in the parks this summer. Council members expressed surprise at the small number of enforcement staff assigned to Parks statewide. John Wales from White Clay Creek was promoted to the title of Regional Enforcement Officer replacing Scott Carrow who retired.

V. **Section Updates** – A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed.

1. Administrative Services – *Greg Abbott shared highlights from the Park Council Report.*

Annual report:

Copies of the Annual report were given to each of the Council members.

Retail Program:

All campground stores opened Easter weekend.

Killens Pond has a new merchandise cooler for products requiring cold storage.

Walmart.com is a new vendor being tested at Killens for retail sales.

Cape Henlopen Seaside Nature Center and store opened in April.

Annual Passes Going Outside:

The Division has been addressing some concerns with the adhesive for the new permits. A replacement supply is being ordered that are thicker and more weather resistant.

Active Network:

On March 22nd, Active Network opened online and in the call center for customers to make reservations for Cape Henlopen's newly upgraded campground; renovations will be completed by Memorial Day weekend for the season. To date, all sites for weekends are booked through August 2nd.

Requests for Proposals (RFP):

Lums Pond State Park: soliciting proposals for public outdoor recreation activities and equestrian programs. The Equestrian program is currently operated by Sunset Stables.

Bellevue State Park: RFP is for a public recreational equestrian program currently operated by Wellspring Farms.

Statewide:

There is a new licensing agreement for food trucks to enter the State parks for public programs.

Website Redesign:

The website was visited by 188,343 visitors from 144 countries. All park pages and half the attraction pages have been completed.

Publications:

Forty eight (48) print/design projects completed since last review.

- 2016 Annual Report
- 2017 Spring program guide plus individual program guides for Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore and First State Heritage Park
- Logo for the Fort Miles Museum
- Taffy box design
- Summer Concert Series booklet

Enterprise Development:

Corporate Pass Sales: Approximate 300 corporate pass sales since January 1, totaling more than \$7,000.

Lifeguard Stand Advertising: Lifeguard stand advertising this year has raised \$25,000, an increase of 85% from 2016.

Escape the Fort: Parks next event is coming this summer, “prisoners” (participants) will be in processed on Pea Patch Island into Fort Delaware just as they were during the Civil War. From there they will complete a historically scavenger hunt and try to “Escape the Fort” just as prisoners attempted in 1863.

DRBA/Cape May Lewes Ferry Partnership:

“Plan a Day with the Ferry” Delaware State Parks and Cape May Lewes Ferry are partnering to increase walk-on, drive-on and bike-on visitors. This includes a \$15,000 multi-year sponsorship from DRBA for a wayside exhibit and signage within the park promoting the ferry as being walk-on and bike-on friendly.

Umbrella Sponsorship:

Delaware Tourism (VisitDelaware.com) has sponsored this project purchasing 50 new umbrellas with Delaware State Parks logo on them. Not only does this fill the need for new umbrellas but also helps us better advertise our brand on the beaches.

Delaware State Parks Partnering with Subway at Firefly Music Festival!!

Delaware State Parks was contacted by Ruder Finn, a global public relations firm that represents the Subway restaurant chain. They are a major sponsor of the Firefly Festival this year. They want to tie in the natural wall to environmental education and will be donating money to Delaware State Parks every time a picture is taken and shared online with a specific hashtag. The project will promote the State park’s logo and the initiative at the “flower wall” during Firefly.

Special Events returning in 2017:

The Division will be partnering with La Vida Hospitality and Memphis BBQ Grills for the third annual “Boo-B-Que” Family barbeque festival at Delaware Seashore State Parks. The Old Fashioned Christmas at Bellevue Event and Winter Wonderfest at Cape will be held again. In 2016, 47,000 visitors attended Winter Wonderfest which generated \$150,000.

Marketing:

Branding:

- The Division is working with Miles Media to conduct a marketing research that will give a clearer picture of who our audience is, what they are looking for from our brand, what they think of our current brand and logo, and what they think of new options for logos.
- Miles will rebrand Delaware State Parks both with a new logo and tagline based on the data that is compiled from their research surveys.
- An internal survey with the same questions as the market research survey will be sent out to our staff for feedback and input.

e-newsletter:

Esubscribers exceeded 25,000

Radio:

Committed to a six-month contract with iHeart media. Received \$6,000 in free advertising last month thanks to our current deal with iHeart media.

Social Media:

Exceeded 20,000 likes on Facebook

Exceeded 4, 000 followers on Instagram

Time-lapse video of Cape Henlopen Observation Tour was shared more than 350 times and reached more than 55,000 views.

Partnerships:

Coordinating with Cabela’s to discuss update of interactive store display and future tabling events in their store.

Working with the Wilmington Blue Rocks on in-game advertisements, color guard sponsorship and a Fort Delaware inspired half time game for kids.

Volunteer and Community Involvement:

Veterans Conservation Corps:

The Veterans Conservation Corps teams have completed numerous projects and training over the past three months.

- Northern team assisted in managed deer hunts. Focused on clearing trails at White Clay Creek State Park, Possum Hill Area, and trail projects at Brandywine Creek and Lums Pond.
- Southern Team worked on Boardwalk replacement at Fenwick Island and Tower Road at the Delaware Seashore (DSSP). They also built picnic tables at DSSP.

Replacement of skins on Yurts at Trap Pond and clearing campground of invasive green briar.

- Both teams planted the leftover beach grass from DNREC beach grass planting day.
- Members participated in Certified Interpretive Guide training.

Interns:

During the first quarter of 2017, 397 applications were received for 124 job openings

2. **Operations and Programming** – *Matt Ritter shared highlights from the Parks Council Report.*

Coastal Region:

The Division received a \$250 donation from Delaware resident Tracy McPherson.

Included with the donation was a letter that stated, “in recognition of the kindness and professionalism of Dispatcher Eisenbrey, Volunteer Ranger Kevin and Sgt. Lister for their assistance when two gals and a puppy accidentally got off the trail, found ourselves deep in the Great Dune, and couldn’t find our way out. Thank you for finding us and graciously bring us back!!”

March 1, Doug Ferrar from *DelmarvaNow* featured an article about Delaware Seashore’s 50th anniversary.

The Indian River Marina has officially reached capacity with wet slips and dry storage.

April 1, staff at the Seaside Nature Center at Cape Henlopen held a “soft re-opening” of the building to invite the public to see the brand new nature exhibits. The updated exhibits feature three large panels that each describe a habitat found in the park, Osprey Camera monitor surrounded by an original mural painted by local artist Rob Sample, touch and hold replicas of Osprey eggs and skulls to help visitors learn more about the birds of prey. The Nature Center also has a new marine touch tank that is the centerpiece of the nature exhibits.

March 30, a 90mm anti-aircraft artillery piece arrived at Cape Henlopen.

The 49th Annual Great Delaware Kite Festival was held at Cape Henlopen on April 14th.

Inland Pond Region:

Three news articles about Fort DuPont appeared in the *News Journal/Delawareonline* on Feb 24 and 25th. Featured stories were about the Redevelopment Corporation, a proposed levee to keep water from Fort DuPont, and the abandoned handicapped and abused children hospital at Governor Bacon from 1948- thru 1975.

Killens Pond cabins were completely booked the weekend of March 11 and the staff received the following note from the Morgan family who camped at the Park March 10-March 12, “We can’t wait to come back again. (This is our first time.) The trails were so great for a family hike. The nature center was so cool with its turtles, snakes and fish that put on quite a show. The park and cabins are beautifully maintained leaving a welcome

distraction from daily necessities to the realities of what is important... family and nature. Thank you for providing this.”

March 23, the Trap Pond Mobile Science Lab was attended by 160 students from Frederick Douglas Elementary.

April 8 and 9, the Laurel Chamber of Commerce held their Party at the Pond Jeep Jamboree with approximately 65 jeeps pre-registered. The event also included camping discounts at Trap Pond.

Staff at the Trap Pond Nature Center received the following:

“Dear Will, On behalf of the Crossroads Community Church, Garden Cell I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the talk on our native birds this past Saturday morning. We greatly appreciated all of the information you shared with us on feeding and attracting birds to our yards. Also, the printouts on making food and types of food to buy was a very useful tool. It was evident to us that you love what you do! Keep up the good work. God Bless, Nancy Schnabel, Crossroad Community Church, Garden Cell.”

Northern Region:

March 4, Alapocas Run held the Blue Ball 10th Anniversary “Barn Bash” with 52 visitors.

March 22, the Brandywine School District’s Elementary Student Art Exhibit opened at the Blue Ball Barn, showcasing student’s talents in visual and musical arts, with more than 1240 visitors through the weekend.

March 29, the Brandywine School District’s Secondary School Art Exhibit opened at the Blue Ball Barn with more than 500 visitors attending the event.

March 25, Governor Carney kicked off the Immaculate Heart of Mary 5K Run/Walk at the Bellevue Figure-8 Barn. More than 200 people participated.

Stewardship:

January 5, Deerfield Managed Hunt, twenty five hunters participated, a total of six deer taken.

January 11, 18 and 25, Thompson Island Managed Archery Hunt, no deer were harvested during this hunt.

Statewide:

February 15, approximately 250 Delaware State Parks employees attended Parks School at Dover Downs Hotel. Ron Vickers’s received the Clyde L. Shipman Award for Excellence in Park Management.

March 29, the Division held its Annual Employee Awards Ceremony at the Officer’s Club at Cape Henlopen. Staff from throughout the Division was on hand to celebrate the accomplishments of their coworkers

3. **Planning, Preservation and Development** – *Matt Chesser shared highlights from the Parks Council Report.*

Park Resource Office (PRO):

The Preservation and Planning Offices have been combined. Bob Ehemann was selected to manage the newly formed Park Resource Office.

Trails and Pathways Initiative:

Recreational trails are among the most needed outdoor recreation facilities in Delaware- a need that is well documented in the 2013 Delaware Outdoors Plan-the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Recreational Trails Program funds are critical in maintaining existing trails and the development of new trails that meet the public's need for trail activities.

Federal Recreational Trail Program:

As outlined last quarter, the Division administers Federal Recreational Trail Program funds that are passed through DelDOT from the Federal Highway Administration.

White Clay Creek State Park:

- Tri-Valley Trail-Phase 1 is about 1.7 mile of trails with new trailhead. 60% complete. A cultural landscape study for phase 2 required by the State Historic Preservation Office and bog turtle survey continues. This phase will connect the county-managed Paper Mill to WCCSP at the intersection of Corner Ketch/Paper Mill Roads. Phase 2 is about 1.1 miles long.
- Possum Hill Accessible Trail is 80% complete
- Charles Bailey Trail-Construction will start later this year.
- Auburn Valley Trail-Engineering complete. In pre-bid phase.

Lums Pond State Park

- Little Jersey Trailhead-Bid. Awaiting DelDOT agreement to proceed.
- Fork Branch Trail- In design. Anticipated fall finalizing construction start.

Holts Landing State Park

- Sea Hawk Trail-In design. Anticipated construction to start late 2017 or early 2018

State Parks Trail Program

- PRO staff helped to administer the planning, design, construction, and maintenance projects under state funding.
 - Brandywine Creek Trail plan
 - Updating White Clay Creek Trail Plan
 - Killens Pond Trail Plan
 - Cape Henlopen Trail Plan
 - Assawoman Canal Trail Phase 2
 - Pinelands Nature Trail maintenance
 - Data Collection of trail infrastructure
 - Trail visitation and counter collection

In Support of Outdoor Recreation, Health Families and Tourism:

Outdoor Recreation, Park and Trails Grant (ORPT) Program launched the 2017 grant cycle with an invitation letter.

Fort DuPont State Park LWCF 6 (f) Proposed Conversion:

Fort DuPont revitalization Corporation provided an updated appraisal of the 18 acres proposed to be converted from recreation use. The Division is working with the National Park Service for review and approval.

Land and Water Conservation Fund:

PRO anticipates a fall 2017 phone survey to gauge the public's outdoor recreation participation, preferences and trends.

PRO and Stewardship are teaming up to provide park managers and field staff with park specific program information to impacts how parks are managed.

Play OutsiDE web application:

Delaware Department of Technology and Information and Parks Resource Office staff released the Play Outside web application at the 2017 Delaware Recreation and Parks Society conference in February.

Land Preservation Office:

Things are slow because there is no funding for the program. The Division had one closing last quarter. The property involved is located on Holland Glade Road, is 4-5 acres and cost \$225,000.

Natural Areas Programs:

The Council continues to work on dedications. Program Manager Eileen Butler taking courses relating to plant and animal species located on Delaware's Nature Preserves.

Office of Design and Development Construction Project Status-April 2017

- Auburn Heights/NVF
 - Wetland project will be finished by June. This is the area where the main contamination site was located. Over 100,000 pounds of zinc and several tanks of PCB laden material have been removed from the area.
 - Trail project is going out to bid.
 - Gun Club Road-utilities under review for final installation
- Paper Mill and Auburn Heights
 - New entrance, parking lots, trails and historic bridges anticipated out to bid summer 2017, construction to commence fall 2017
 - Park office contract pending with Lawrence Bathon Builders and Summit Mechanical with construction to commence spring 2017
- Trails
 - Oversee trail construction underway, completion spring 2017. CCArts trail construction to commence May 2017 completion early June 2017
- June 4th Yorklyn Day Festival
- Amphitheatre

- Amphitheatre under design, meetings have taken place with the Symphony. Anticipated bidding late 2017.

Brandywine Creek State Park:

- Thompson Road Parking Lot/Kayak Launch
 - Engineer is preparing cost estimate for feasibility study for kayak launch by parking lot. In the interim, Design Development staff is working on temporary kayak launch/intake stair installation ordered and to be installed spring 2017.

Cape Henlopen State Park:

- Cape Campground-Campground renovation construction underway. Campground will be closed until Memorial Day 2017.

Lums Pond State Park:

- Campground-Final punch list items underway, completion mid May 2017

Fort Delaware:

- Solar panel installation will begin at Fort Delaware. Must be completed by June 30th in order to receive reimbursement of Federal funding. Solar panels will produce clean energy at the park and will eliminate the need to run the generator (it will become the backup energy source at the park). PSE&G, through their foundation, is donating all the solar panels and are providing technical advice.

Trap Pond State Park:

- Bethesda Church-Restroom contract awarded to Greenflush Industries. Trail installation from the parking lot to the church is completed. Restroom installed and completed.

Wilmington State Park:

- Josephine Fountain restoration is out to bid with anticipated award and commencement early summer.
- Baynard Stadium-working on press box underway, project completion estimated late summer.

Brandywine Zoo:

- Demolition of the tiger exhibit is complete. Repurposing of area underway, including amphitheater and tent area.

VIII. Old Business

Ray has been participating on the committee that the mayor of the City of Wilmington put together to explore all the options at Baynard Stadium. Three meetings have occurred. They are narrowing the recommendations which include numerous options including the City taking over the entire operation of Baynard and investing in it, the City taking Bond funds and what it would cost to repay that, to an outside partner coming in and taking over just like Salesianum proposed. They have determined that they would like the capacity of the stadium to be similar in capacity to what it was before the temporary bleachers were installed. They also want an 8 lane track. Currently the stadium houses a 6 lane track so

there would have to be major renovations to make this happen. Kevin Kelley, Director of City Parks, has been running tight meetings with members from the local community, the Triangle Association and local sports groups. The task force will not meet the 45 day timeline that the mayor had hoped for but they will have a report available in the next month. There will be a public meeting held at Warner Elementary to solicit feedback on the different options.

IX. New Business

Annual Report: Greg Abbott shared the three versions of the report cover. Copies were given to each Council member.

Fifteen plus years ago, the Division purchased a piece of property that contained the Wolfe Neck Treatment Center. There was an agreement that the County would run the treatment plant. The agreement expired and the Division has been in talks with the County about renewing the agreement. The County proposed the Division with a revolutionary idea. Currently the property has a spray irrigation system on it similar to those used on farmers' fields. There have been problems with this system and the ground is not absorbing the liquid well. So they proposed a major upgrade including connecting that facility to another facility in Lewes. That would allow sewage to be sent to the other facility if/when there are times that they cannot spray. The other change would be they will be treating at a higher level and instead of rogue crops they will plant trees like a pine plantation. The Center for the Inland Bays will work with them to plant a mixed forest which will become a silviculture. The County is proposing giving the Division \$1M and so that we can install a trail. The Division has funds to complete the trail so this money would most likely go toward capital projects and the Division would utilize existing funds to honor the agreement. The money come to us \$200 K per year over the next 5 years. The public will have use of the property which would be a huge improvement. They want to buy out the farmer on the adjacent property which the farmer seems happy with because he has been incurring losses due to the excess moisture. Sussex County would replace the existing BioSun composting bathroom and install a bathroom which would be attached to the County sewer system. They would also connect the Wolfe Neck house and waive the fees for both facilities. This area is becoming very popular; the issues that existed here just a year ago were resolved through the installation of the surveillance system. There have been no recent arrests in that area. The Division has been approached by a group interested in installing a pickle ball court at that site. This proposal was approved by the County Council and the Secretary is on board. The agreement with the County would be for 25 years and would allow the public to use the area for bird watching and hiking. In the future the Junction Breakwater Trail would be connected to the Gordons Pond Trail and would allow users to travel safely without worrying about car traffic. The Center for the Inland Bays sees this as a "homerun" in protecting the bay. As part of the agreement they will be hiring the University of Delaware to study the success of this process. Ray asked the Council to vote on the proposal that the Division sign a 25 year lease with the Sussex County Treatment Facility.

Ron Breeding asked if this proposal will put the County in control of that operation. Ray stated that we will be getting more control of the site through this agreement. The property was purchased with Open Space Funds and the public hasn't really had access to the land but putting the trail in will allow that access.

Ron Breeding made a motion to approve signing the agreement with Sussex County regarding the Wolfe Neck Treatment Facility and the improvement that are planned. Greg Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Division is talking with the City of Lewes about connecting the Cape Henlopen State Park sewage treatment facility to the Lewes treatment plant. The Division is facing \$5M in improvements at that site.

Ray noted that for the first time in our history, the majority of the funds for our capital improvement have come from outside resources. He believes this will be the trend because the \$2.5M which is allocated from the State is not going to allow us to make the necessary improvements.

There is a new restaurant at Summit North Marina called Grain. A settlement agreement was reach with Summit North Marina. Greg Johnson is familiar with the Grain restaurant located in Newark and feels it is well-run.

X. Upcoming Events

- **May 16th – Ribbon cutting at the Big Chill Restaurant**
- **May 22 - Ribbon cutting at Cape Henlopen Campground**
- **Next meeting August 3, 2017** – Council suggested IRM office for meeting then lunch at the new restaurant on the beach side.

Edith asked if there was any chance of getting a food vendor on the island at Fort Delaware. Ray said that the Division had put that out in the past and that we had even offered to allow the vendor to set up free of charge and we didn't get any takers. Ray thinks added amenities might help to entice a food vendor for instance if the Escape Room becomes popular or if the Division erects a pavilion on the island and offers it to groups of 30 or more at no charge. Have a "critical mass" on the island is the key to getting a food vendor. Matt Chesser added that the lack of potable water is also an issue for food preparation and clean up. Once there is reliable, constant power on the island, the Division can look at the possibility of adding a well.

The Division is about to initiate a \$900K roof replacement at Deerfield. That is a huge portion of the \$2.5M allocated this year for capital projects.

Clyde asked about a proposal to replace the Garrisons Lake Golf Club trailer with something better. Greg Abbott stated that Forewinds Hospitality is proposing building something similar to a prefab home. The Division would still have to go through the permitting process and meet ADA standards. The cost of the building is \$190K + with the final install price equaling approximately \$250K. The office is currently leased through William Scotsman and the lease ended in April so the Division is paying month to month while we consider this proposal. However, this is not the highest priority on our capital projects list and the \$2.5M allocated to the Division is dwindling quickly. Forewinds proposal is to have a "light" kitchen so that they can provide some hotdogs and hamburgers and an alcoholic beverage. They would have the ability to seat 100 people inside. The proposal is on the potential funding list for next year but it depends on our revenue. The revenue from Deerfield and Garrisons goes into one pot of money, after all the expenses are paid, the excess is rolled back into the two properties for capital improvements. Clyde stated that a patron suggested that Delaware State Parks needs to be more prominent at Garrisons, to "take

credit for what's happening there." Visitors use the cart path as a walking trail but Ray stated the trail needs a lot of attention. Everyone agreed that a facility on site would help Garrisons to become a break-even operation. Deerfield does an excellent job of running Garrisons. One of Deerfield's golf professionals Kurt Zolbe is managing the operation at Garrisons Lake.

Through the Governor's reset of the budget, DNREC lost 7%. A list was created of items to cut from the budget. The Division did not have anything in the top 7%. There were some small amounts of money "swept" from the Division. DNREC lost 22 positions, two of those were from our Division.

Greg Johnson asked what our greatest opportunities are as a Division and also what are our greatest concerns. Ray said automated fee machines are key especially with the minimum wage going up. We will be piloting 2-3 fee machines at the beach parks. Other State Park systems are using them now and have seen an increase in revenue because people are less likely to use iron rangers because they don't carry cash. With these machines folks can use their credit cards to pay for parking. Our greatest challenge is our capital backlog. We receive \$2.5M annually and our project list totals \$160M; eventually something is going to "catch up to us". Matt Ritter added that the private partnerships are not taking care of the backlog.

XI. Meeting Adjournment

The chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Ron Breeding made a motion to adjourn, Joe Smack seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.